

DRAFT

Rockville Environment Commission Minutes of the Meeting of Thursday, June 6, 2013 Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue

Attendance

Commissioners Present: John Becker, Kris Dighe, Beri Kravitz, Clark Reed and Lea Rosenbohm

Commissioners Absent: Steve Cardon, Julie Palakovich Carr, Alicia Hosmer and Devinie Lye

Guests: Mark Charles, Environmental Management
Erica Shingara, Environmental Management

Meeting Commencement

The meeting convened at 7:32 pm by Chair Reed.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Dighe moved and Commissioner Becker seconded approval of the May 2, 2013 meeting minutes with no corrections. The motion passed 3-0-2.

City Solar Initiative

Erica Shingara briefed the Commission on progress to date in installing solar electricity (photovoltaic) generating equipment at several City properties around Rockville. Rockville currently spends approximately 2% (\$2,431,950) of its annual operating budget on electrical purchases. The City can potentially generate 1.16 megawatts (1.25 million kWh) of electricity and save approximately \$151,497 each year (\$1.469M over a 25 year period) on utility bills if it pursues this course of action. The solar panels would provide 60% of the power needs at the Gude Maintenance Facility; 22% at the Swim Center; 175% at Mattie Stepanek Park; and 65% at the Thomas Farm Community Center.

Commissioner Dighe moved and Commissioner Kravitz seconded that the Commission endorse the project. After brief discussion, the Commission approved the motion 5-0-0.

Smart Energy Communities Grant

Erica Shingara also briefed the Commission on the \$97,300 grant the City has received from the Maryland Energy Administration. These funds can be used to improve the energy efficiency of HVAC equipment at several locations. If the City accepts the grant, it will require Rockville to set an interim energy reduction goal of 15%, and to seek energy reductions of 20% by 2022. Commissioner Dighe moved and Commissioner Becker seconded that the Commission endorse the grant and its conditions. After brief discussion, the Commission approved the motion 5-0-0.

Georgetown University Energy Competition

Chair Reed presented an opportunity for the City to participate in a national competition to reduce energy consumption from municipal and residential buildings. The competition is for communities of 250,000 or less and has been organized by Georgetown University. The competition winner will receive a \$5 million prize. Participation requires an initial refundable entrance fee of \$1,000 and a non-refundable application fee of \$2,000 (for a total of \$3,000). Contestants will have 2 years (1/2014-1/2016) to reduce electricity and natural gas consumption as much as possible. The University will provide technical assistance. During the discussion, a concern was expressed that Montgomery County might preclude Rockville's participation if it chose to participate itself (subsequently we determined that Montgomery County is not eligible to participate in the program because its population is larger than 250,000).

Commissioner Becker moved and Commissioner Dighe seconded that the Commission explore the details of the program further and make a recommendation about the City's participation at a future meeting. After brief discussion, the Commission approved the motion 5-0-0.

Hometown Holidays Debrief

The Environmental Movie

- The *Chasing Ice* film was shown on Friday, May 23 and Saturday, May 24. Approximately 45 people viewed the film. No one attended the 4:00 pm late Saturday afternoon screening.
- The City Council Chambers location was okay but not optimal. If a film is to be shown again next year, Commissioners would like try to convince Regal Cinema to participate or to return to the Rockville Library. There was also some support for de-coupling the film from Hometown Holidays.

Display Materials

- There was some initial confusion about where the Commission's Booth was to be, but it was resolved to everyone's satisfaction.
- Due to the need to cover the movie screening, the booth was a little understaffed.
- The sunglasses give-a-ways were a big hit and sold out quickly. The Commission may want to add something more geared to adults next year.
- The solar tracking display attracted more people than last year.
- Approximately 50 people entered the rain barrel raffle. The winner (The Gottsesman residence at 2504 Linley Terrace) was drawn during the meeting and Environmental Management will deliver it to the residence.
- Commissioners need to be briefed on the recycling program, the watershed model, the solar collector and solar potential website, and other aspects of the City sustainability programs so they are better equipped to answer detailed questions. A binder of talking points per subject may be useful.

Environmental Excellence Awards

Since four Commissioners were unable to attend the meeting, the remaining Commissioners decided to table consideration of the 3 nominations until the July meeting.

Multi-City Meeting

Commissioners Becker, Cardon and Dighe attended the Thursday, April 18 meeting of the multi-city boards and commissions in Chevy Chase. Rockville offered to host the October meeting which was accepted by the group.

PARC-IT Program

Commissioner Dighe led a brief discussion of the “*Program Alternatives for Rockville Commuters – Incentives for Transit*” (PARC-IT) program that will not carry forward into the FY 2014 budget. Commissioners discussed the history and purpose of the program and the role it played in the City’s overall approach to sustainability. The program has been an incentive to using METRO and carpooling for a number of years. Commissioner Dighe volunteered to draft a letter to the City manager expressing concern for the program’s termination. He will circulate it to other Commissioners for comment.

Backyard Hens White Paper

Chair Reed circulated a factsheet on the benefits and concerns of allowing residents to keep backyard hens (no roosters). The Commission discussed the merits of seeking to amend the City zoning code to allow backyard hens with certain restrictions (e.g., distance, number of hens, enclosure, prohibit roosters, etc.). The Commission also looked at other neighboring jurisdictions that have allowed this practice, including Gaithersburg and Baltimore City. Commissioner Becker volunteered to poll the Multi-City workgroup to get the latest information regarding City and County positions on the subject. Ultimately, the factsheet will be revised into a white paper encouraging the City staff and the Mayor and Council to allow hens, if appropriate. Commissioner Dighe moved and Commissioner Rosenbohm seconded a motion to revise and submit such a white paper and the motion passed 4-0-1.

Environmental Management Staff Report

- Mark Charles reported that the FY 2014 budget adopted by the Mayor and Council on May 20, 2013 includes \$60k in funding for the first year of the high performance green building tax credit for existing buildings. The funding will be available on July 1, 2013.
- The Environmental Management Division has moved from 30 Courthouse Square to 20 Courthouse Square, Suite 205, Rockville, Maryland 20850-2336. Staff phone numbers and email addresses are the same. Commissioners are invited to drop by and tour the offices.
- The City is redesigning its website, including its environment and sustainability pages. The new site is expected to launch on June 18.

Rescheduling the July 4 Meeting

After a brief discussion, the July 4 meeting was rescheduled to the same time on July 3, 2013. This meeting will be held in the *Black Eyed Susan* Conference Room.

New Business

- Chair Reed distributed a draft letter aimed at residents that have installed solar panels on their homes. The letter thanks them for “going solar” and inquires as to their interest in promoting solar to other City residents, including participation in the National Solar Homes Tour scheduled for Saturday, October 5, 2013. Commissioners commented on the letter and Chair Reed will revise it and bring it back to the Commission at the July meeting.
- Chair Reed also led a discussion on moving forward with the commercial energy competition. He has found a website of an organization called “*In Your Backyard*” that will design a website for the event as well as seek advertisements. Commissioner Dighe moved and Commissioner Rosenbohm seconded a motion for Chair Reed to seek out additional details and report back to the Commission in July. The motion passed 5-0-0.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 by unanimous consensus.

Next Commission Meeting

The next Commission meeting is *tentatively* scheduled for **Wednesday, July 3, 2013 at 7:30 pm** in the **Diamondback Conference Room** of the **Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland, 20850**. The public is invited to attend.